

MediaTitle	New Straits Times		
Date	03 Nov 2015	Language	English
Circulation	74,711	Readership	240,000
Section	Local News	Color	Full Color
Page No	10	ArticleSize	219 cm ²
AdValue	RM 7,520	PR Value	RM 22,560



Pua's 1MDB focus fails to do him much good in DAP polls



OUTSPOKEN politician Tony Pua's foothold in DAP remains fragile despite his reappointment as the party's Selangor chairman.

This was evidenced by the results of Selangor DAP's election on Sunday, which saw Pua garnering fewer votes than his deputy, Gobind Singh Deo, who topped the polls with 736 votes.

Out of the 15 leaders elected to helm the party's Selangor chapter, Pua was in eighth position, earning 495 votes. In the last state party election in 2013, Pua placed sixth with 422 votes.

According to political analyst Khoo Kay Peng, Pua's outspoken views on national issues like the 1Malaysia Development Bhd controversy had failed to win him extra support.

He said this was because the Petaling Jaya Utara member of parliament remains unpopular among factions in DAP despite serving as state chairman since 2013.

"He (Pua) has built up his public

image quite well.

"He is a good opposition MP, but he is seen as a leader from (DAP secretary-general) Lim Guan Eng's faction," Khoo told the *New Straits Times* yesterday.

Khoo, who runs a consultancy, said Gobind was well received by DAP delegates because he was a "less divisive" figure in the predominantly Chinese party.

"This (election result) is something for Pua to ponder over.

"He was handpicked by Guan Eng and subsequently promoted in the party," Khoo said, adding that he was familiar with the duo's working relationship.

Despite his inability to win the majority support of Selangor DAP delegates, Pua's position as chairman was ensured, thanks to the party's cadre system.

Although Pua did not come first among the 15 candidates, he was chosen based on the consensus reached by the newly-elected state DAP committee.

It is standard practice for the elected committee to convene a meeting after a party election, where they will choose among themselves the party's office-bearers.

Some have viewed this with concern, saying such a practice is undemocratic and socialist in nature.

The cadre system was started to prevent popular factions from dominating the DAP leadership, including at the national level.

Political analyst Associate Professor Dr Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, from Universiti Utara Malaysia, said Pua's lacklustre performance in the state election was unsurprising.

"This is more of an internal issue in DAP.

"I am not sure why he got fewer votes, but Pua definitely has less influence in DAP."

Pua's moderate popularity may not reflect his influence in the public sphere.

The DAP national publicity chief has been vocal on issues pertaining to 1MDB and has even challenged its president and group executive director, Arul Kanda Kandasamy, to a televised debate.

While some grassroots members are uncomfortable with Pua's style of politics and his apparent loyalty to Guan Eng, the DAP leadership continues to view the lawmaker as a valuable asset.

"It is clear that not all DAP leaders can accept his approach, but his ability to remain as Selangor DAP chairman means that the DAP leadership likes his methods and gives its full support to him," said Dr Azizuddin.

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